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Smoking Cause of Lincoln House Fire
Missing Smoke Alarms Gave Fire Head Start

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Lincoln Fire Chief Arthur Cotoni announced the cause of the May 6, 2005 fire at 12 Airport Road was improper disposal of smoking materials. Investigators believe there were no working smoke alarms in the home. Chief Cotoni said, "This fire had a big head start on us because there were no working smoke alarms in the home." He added, "These people are so lucky to be alive because the toxic smoke in a fire puts people into a deeper sleep and confuses the brain making it hard to escape even familiar places."

The fire was investigated by the A.C.L.M.W.W. (Acton, Concord, Lincoln, Maynard, Wayland, and Weston) Regional Fire Investigation Team, the Lincoln Police Department, and State Police investigators assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Massachusetts uses a witness-driven, team concept protocol for fire investigation.

State Fire Marshal Coan said, "Smoke alarms are your first line of defense in a fire. It is important to make sure they are there and in good work order."

Chief Cotoni said, "No one thinks fire will ever happen to them. As we teach school children in the Student Awareness of Fire Education Program, it is important to have a home escape that includes working smoke alarms, two ways out and a meeting place."

Mutual aid was received from Hanscom Air Force Base, Lexington, Concord and Weston Fire Departments.

Smoking Caused 4% of Fires but Leading Cause of Fire Deaths

According to the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS), during 2003, 1,240, or 4%, of the 27,715 reported incidents were caused by the improper use or disposal of smoking materials. These 1,240 caused 18, or 30% of the 61 civilian deaths and 35% of

the 52 structure fire deaths, 59 civilian injuries, 48 fire service injuries, and an estimated dollar loss of \$12.6 million.